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# MUSIC, MONARCHS, AND "THE SAVAGE BREAST"

By FREDERICK H. MARTENS

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast . . ."—*Shakespeare*.

**S**HAKESPEARE'S dictum is so well-known, so widely quoted, that it is generally accepted as a statement of fact rather than a poetical hypothesis. Yet, if we look into a varied assortment of "savage breasts" of all races and ages, selecting for the purpose those of the rulers of men, hedged by a divinity which by now seems somewhat discredited, we find that, contrary to the assertion of the Bard of Avon, music has no paregoric virtues where they are concerned. On the contrary, the majority of royal monsters, degenerates, tyrants, madmen and weaklings, seem to have cherished music without their "savage breasts" ever reacting to the gentling effect of its charm.

## THE STRONG KINGS

The strong kings, the virile rulers, the conquerors and statesmen among crowned heads, seem to owe their preeminence in a measure to their immunity from the vitiating influence of dulcet tone. For Henry IV of France, the strong man of the Bourbons, the tender busses of Gabrielle d'Estrées, no doubt, made sweeter-sounding music than any of Marot's Huguenot psalms. And Henry, as kings go, is accounted a great king to this day. It was left for the unutterably vicious and depraved Henry III, last of the Valois, to hand down to posterity an "Air du Roi Henri III," which, even if apocryphal, testifies to his musical leanings. For one Frederick the Great of Prussia, tootling away on his flute, entreating Johann Sebastian Bach with reverence, and writing sonatas for his chosen instrument, we have conquerors like Alexander, whom no dithyrambic pæan at the Olympian Games ever pleased half so well as the measured tramp of the Macedonian phalanx; Julius Cæsar, that resourceful bald-head who, though he directed his martial Gallic ballets with splendid bravura, used only the *tubas* and *bucinas* in his legionary orchestra, and probably looked on them as no more than a necessary evil; and Napoleon regarding music as a means to political ends, and at heart fancying only such

percussives as drum and cannon when they were pounding out the rhythms of victory. It is sad for the music-lover to reflect that wherever we may look in the history of the ancients, the virtuous, the noble, the manly among the leaders are those who are free from any musical taint. The good and great kings are usually those who are quite devoid of musical taste or inclination. It is not easy to find a musical monarch to whom the word "respectable" may be fittingly applied. On the other hand, how numerous are the instances of "savage breasts" of music-loving wearers of the diadem unmollified by the music they cherished.

Of course, one may cite the case of David. Here we have a great, wise and, generally speaking, just monarch, who was passionately addicted to the best music known to his age, and who wrote his own psalms. Yet there is a rift in the lute of his perfection. According to Rabbinic tradition, King David used to hang his *kinnor* or lyre at the head of his bed at night "when it sounded in the midnight breeze." This Aeolian harp, stirring amorously to the voluptuous Oriental zephyrs, must have induced a train of thought entirely opposite to that developed by those devout psalm-settings of which the King of Israel was so fond, and may have been responsible, in a degree, for the ingenious tactical disposition which resulted in General Uriah's going West. The charms which soothed the "savage breast" of the father of Solomon were not always those of music. And if so great a monarch as David could so swiftly fall from grace when subjected to the direct influence of profane melody, though steeped in the antidote of devotional psalms, what of those whose music was altogether worldly?

#### DIONYSIUS THE TYRANT

There were the tyrants of Syracuse, Dionysius the Elder, and Dionysius the Younger, his son. The elder Dionysius had poetic aspirations, though his poems were hissed by the auditors at the Olympian Games; while the younger Dionysius was a musician. And what sort of a monarch was this exponent of vocal culture? Plutarch tells us: "It is reported of him that having begun a drunken debauch, he continued it ninety days without intermission, in all which time no person on business was allowed to appear, nor was any serious conversation heard at court; but drinking, *singing*, dancing and buffonery reigned there without control." Dionysius's tyranny and misgovernment led to his being driven from his magnificent Syracusan palace, with its ample wine-cellars and splendid banquet-halls, and having to take refuge in Corinth.

Here "the very same man, that was not long before supreme monarch of Sicily," spent his time turning a more or less honest penny—Plutarch does not disclose to us whether his vocal methods were reliable—"pretending to instruct the singing women of the theatre, and seriously disputing with them about the measure and harmony of pieces of music that were performed there." We suspect that Dionysius's system of voice placing was not all that it might have been. On the other hand, vocal teachers in those times did not receive the splendid financial rewards a higher civilization accords them to-day. But Dionysius is a striking example of the weak and tyrannous ruler who at the same time was a music-lover.

### THE PTOLEMIES

There were only two Dionysii; with the second the dynasty ends. But if we take that of the Ptolemies, the post-Alexandrian rulers of Egypt, we find that the worth-while Ptolemies were those who had no music in their hearts. Old Ptolemy I (Soter), Alexander's general, who founded this dynasty of Macedonian kings, was a shrewd, able and eminently cautious monarch with a taste for literature, not music. His son, Ptolemy II, Philadelphus, was also able, and took an ardent interest in Hellenic culture. He was a kind of Macedonian Louis XIV, and his court was liberally garnished with de la Vallières, de Fontanges, and de Montespons, but—he does not seem to have had any Lullis or Rameaus! Ptolemy III (Euergetes I), was a successful conqueror, another able king with no musical annals. But when we come to Ptolemy IV (Philopator), the musical son of the preceding, we find that he is a wretched debauchee, indulging in all the vices, and leaving the serious affairs of government to unworthy favorites. He paid great attention to the orgiastic forms of religion, or to use Plutarch's words: ". . . the king was so besotted with his women and his wine, that the employment of his most busy and serious hours consisted at the utmost in celebrating religious feasts in his palace, carrying a timbrel and taking part in the show." It was this wretched timbrel-player who did away with that noble Spartan, King Cleomenes, who had taken refuge in Egypt. Nicoragas, the Messenian, an old acquaintance of Cleomenes, met him in Alexandria, and told him that he had brought along some excellent war-horses for the king in his ship. Cleomenes smiled and answered: 'I wish you had rather brought some music-girls, for these now are the king's chief occupation.' Nicoragas repeated Cleomenes's jibe, and Ptolemy promptly had him murdered. For,

in the old days when a musical monarch's artistic temperament got the better of him, things really and actually happened to his critics.

Ptolemy V (Epiphanes) was an athlete and sportsman, and an energetic ruler, but no musician. Ptolemy VI (Philometor) was one of the best of the Ptolemies, brave, kindly, reasonable. Was it because music played no part in his life? His younger brother, and joint-king of Egypt with him, Ptolemy VII, known as *Physkon* or "The Bloated," was an evil fat man, one without natural affection, "delighting in deeds of blood, his body as loathsome in its blown corpulence as his soul," and very, very musical. He both sang and played the flute.

The dynasty of the Ptolmies is already well along in its decline, the successive reigns have become a mere kaleidoscopic chronicle of strife, intrigue and assassination. Ptolemy XI, nicknamed *Auletes*, or "The Flute-player," spent most of his reign in Rome, trying to buy his way back into power in Egypt, whence he had been driven by popular hatred—he was, perhaps, a poor musician!—and in the person of his daughter Cleopatra, "the serpent of the Nile," and the prototype of the modern "vamp," we have a fine musical *connoisseuse*, possessed of great taste and skill, in whom the family came to an end. Cleopatra was fond of having music at her meals—Syrian kithara players, Syracusan harpistes, Athenian girls plucking the five-stringed lyre, rendered instrumental selections or accompanied the singers who sang at her banquets, where Massican and Grecian wines and palm-brandy flowed unchecked by Nilotic blue laws. Music seems always to have remained one of Cleopatra's continuing interests, and her propensity to let herself go, to react subconsciously to the insidious suggestion of lasciv sound, may have been responsible for many of her crimes and misfortunes. Even in her day there were in existence Egyptian popular songs, whose performance she encouraged. And we have only to examine the texts and music of some of our own popular songs to-day, to get an inkling of the lengths to which their like may have led an emotional and temperamental royal musician like Egypt's queen to go. Marc Anthony might have triumphed over Octavius Caesar, had it not been for his addiction to music. For, rude soldier though he was, Marc Anthony also was musically inclined. In Rome, while Caesar was away hunting down the unfortunate Pompey, he "had his singing girls quartered upon the houses of serious fathers and mothers of families." And when he passed over into Asia, "a set of harpers and pipers . . . and a whole Bacchic rout of the like Asiatic exhibitors . . . came in and possessed the court. When he made his entry into Ephesus . . . throughout the town nothing was to be

seen but spears wreathed with ivy, harps, flutes and psalteries; while Anthony in their songs was Bacchus, the Giver of Joy, and the Gentle." Of course, when Cleopatra came sailing up the river Cydnus to meet him, in her barge with purple sails and oars of silver, the latter "beat time to the music of flutes and fifes and harps." In the final analysis they paid the piper, for both these musical rulers, the diademed queen and the uncrowned proconsul, were involved in the same tragic fate.

#### NERO, THE FIRST IMPERIAL TENOR

Among the earlier Roman emperors the greatest of monsters is the musical Nero. He began as a boy by murdering his brother Britannicus for a song's sake. It was during the festivities of the Saturnalia, in the palace, and the young Prince Nero had been chosen king in a game of king's forfeits, by the cast of the dice. After various ones among the company had paid their forfeits in various ways, Nero called on Britannicus to sing them a song. The younger lad sang well and bravely, and he sang a song that described his own ill fortunes and spoiled life. The pathos of the song and the singer moved his patrician listeners, and Nero made note of the fact. As a result Britannicus was poisoned not long after. Nero might have overlooked the political dangers involved in his brother's becoming the head of a faction; but he would not and could not forgive him for singing better than he himself did. As the emperor grew older in sin, his love for music increased, though the average Roman had the greatest contempt for the musical performances which Nero so much enjoyed. The American multi-millionaire builds him an expensive pipe-organ in his home: Nero laid out a species of "Golden Glades" in his private gardens, A. D. 59, and to top off the revels he celebrated there, himself "appeared on the rustic stage of the garden theatre, surrounded by his musicians and, tuning his guitar carefully, sang to the noble company, to their great delight." This "great delight" must, however, be taken with a pinch of salt. It was dangerous for anyone in the audience to be anything less than delighted when Nero appeared as a solo artist. His poetry, music and acting have been, it is true, accorded the dubious merit of being "at least respectable" by one historian; but "respectable" in the critical terminology of art is, unfortunately, on a level with the evasive "pleasing," and neither means very much. One of the main accusations urged by the enemies of Seneca, when they endeavored to prejudice Nero against his former tutor, was that "he sneered at his singing." When Poppaea conspired against

Nero's wife Octavia, to bring about her divorce from the emperor, she falsely charged her with an intrigue, not with some patrician of high descent, but—with an Alexandrian flute-player! For bad as it might have been to have preferred another man to the emperor, a still more heinous crime would have been to have preferred another artist to the artist-prince. When Tiridates came to Rome to be crowned King of Parthia by his over-lord, the Emperor Nero amid the banquets, exhibitions and games in his honor, did not spare him displays of his own playing upon the harp. And the untutored *savage* had a sufficiently intelligent mind to hear his god in the strings, if not in the wind. For a long time Nero sang only in private. But like many who have a "drawing-room voice," he longed for the recital-stage and a larger audience. "His voice was, in fact, thin and inclined to be hoarse"; though he himself was so proud of it, and longed impatiently to try it out in public. "There is no respect for hidden music," he was wont to say, quoting a Greek proverb. Yet he did not dare choose a Roman city for his vocal debut, such was the prejudice against an emperor's appearing as a public singer. We have an echo of this prejudice in connection with Piso's conspiracy to murder Nero, and become emperor in his stead. Subrius Flavus, the tribune, one of the conspirators, was reported to have said that he would kill Piso so soon as Nero were dead. "The soldiers were not going to replace a harpist (Nero) by a vocalist (Piso). That would not heal the disgrace!" Nero chose the Grecised city of Naples for his "coming-out," in A. D. 64, and no sooner was his recital over, and the theatre emptied, than an earthquake destroyed it. This seems more than a coincidence: Nature herself appears to voice a protest. His first performance in Rome was on the occasion of the burning of the city, and though for various reasons, it is too much to say that "Nero fiddled while Rome burned," it is highly probable that he did sing, from a safe elevation, while his capital went up in flames, for to the imperial artist the burning city was no more than an effective stage-setting for his glorious singing.

In the reaction from the fear induced by Piso's conspiracy, Nero—quantitatively, at any rate—sang as never before. The Roman Senate, when he announced his intention of singing at the Quinquennial Games, A. D. 65, in a vain effort, perhaps, to stave off hearing the recital which they foresaw they would be forced to attend, offered him the prizes of song and eloquence *before* the performances began. But this piqued Nero, and he said he would meet all comers in the contest for song superiority. The result was, of course, the same. It was disloyal not to applaud. An unbiased opinion as to

Nero's singing was as dangerous then, as one regarding governmental methods might be now. The equivalent of a modern attorney-general had his spies liberally distributed about the theatre, and the Roman Department of Justice acted with the intelligent zeal which marks any bureau of its kind under incompetent and tyrannical rule. It was forbidden to leave the building while Nero was on the stage. Keen-witted Greeks in the audience feigned death in order to be carried out, and Vespasian, who fell asleep during one of the emperor's recitals, nearly lost his life in consequence. It was spared only at the intercession of friends. During Nero's great song-tour of Greece, the concluding event of artistic magnitude of his life, he won—as was to be expected—the chief prizes at all the four festivals, the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean and Isthmian. He returned to Rome with 1,808 crowns of victory, which had been awarded him, riding in a magnificent triumphal procession to celebrate his vocal victories, along the same streets where the great generals and pro-consuls who had given Rome the dominion of the earth had ridden to their more patriotic triumphs. And with him in his chariot was—Diodorus the harper! Nero's crowns were hung on the walls of his bed-chamber, and his image as the harpist-god adorned the streets of the city, and was stamped upon his coins. And then he took up the study of music with renewed energy. The Emperor, as Suetonius declared, “nor yet would he do aught in earnest or mirth without his *Phonascus* by, a *Moderatour* of his voice, to put him in minde for to spare his pipes and hold his handkerchief to his mouth: and to many a man he either offered friendship or denounced enmity according as he praised him more or less.” But the Romans by now had had their fill of Nero. *Vindex* in Gaul and *Galba* in Spain rose against him. The news filled him with terror, but his cruelty was equalled by his incapacity. The musician-emperor makes a few half-hearted efforts to gather troops, but is far more interested in examining some new hydraulic organs, sending late at night for leading knights and senators to rejoice with him in the discovery that: “I have found out how the organ can be made to sound a lower note, and more tunefully.” Or, after a feast, he decides to present himself unarmed to the armies' sight, with no argument save tears only, whereby the rebels would be recalled to their fealty. Then on the following day he would chant the Ode to Victory among his rejoicing legionaries. “Which Ode,” he continues, “I must compose at once!” And before he cuts his throat at the villa of his freedman *Phaon*, when the hoof-beats of his pursuer's horses sound on his ear, he murmurs, “How great an artist dies with me!”



As might be expected, the vicious and incapable Vitellius, who followed Galba and Otho as emperor, admired Nero. "Sing us one of the Master's songs!" he was wont to tell a harpist who pleased him. But when the accession of Vespasian once more gives the Roman world a strong ruler, a man of character and high resolve, we know almost without saying, that music plays no part in his life.

#### HELIOGABALUS

Heliogabalus (A. D. 218-222) is another musical emperor, and what is he like? As Gibbon so neatly puts it: "To confound the order of seasons and climates, to sport with the passions and prejudices of his subjects, and to subvert every law of nature and decency, were among the number of his most delicious amusements." We cannot quote all that Aelius Lampridius, who lived in the fourth century under Diocletian and Constantin, and is the only writer who has written a biography of the monster, has to say; for he says much that is unquotable. Yet there is no doubt but that he was an uncommonly restless and depraved degenerate, gifted with a vicious imagination, fertile in bizarre and disgusting futilities. Some of the artistic touches of this music-loving prince are quite modern. He gave festivals of different colors in summer: one day the table service would be olive-green, another pea-green; the day after it would be blue, and so on through the summer months. He was the first to flavor wine with mint and mastic, as indeed his whole life was devoted to a search for the novelties of voluptu. He took particular pleasure in studying mob psychology—after his own fashion. When great crowds were gathered together for a solemn festival, he had a large number of serpents loosed on them, and uttered cries of delight to see those bitten and those trampled under foot in the ensuing panic, writhing in their agony. Wine of roses and rosebuds filled the baths in which he bathed with his familiars, and one of his pleasant fancies at banquets was to have his guests recline on couches inflated with wind. These were suddenly emptied, and the diners found themselves eating under the table. At night he attended to the business of the day, arising in the evening to receive the homage of his courtiers, and going to bed in the morning. In place of an auto he had a little one-wheeled chariot, gilded and inlaid with jewels, to which he harnessed three or four beautiful girls, and thus drove about the courts of the palace. Since his Syrian priests had predicted he would die a violent death, he kept on hand a stock of nooses, of scarlet and purple silk, with which to strangle himself; he had swords of gold upon which to fall in case of

need; and in hollowed hyacinths and emeralds he carried mortal poisons. He even had a high tower built, from which, if the necessity arose, he meant to fling himself on a board incrustated with gold and precious stones. Thus his death would be embellished with all the trappings of luxury; while at the same time it could be said that no one had ever yet perished in such wise. Yet he was, in the end, slain by the steel broadsword of a rebellious soldier, and his dishonored body flung into the Tiber. How do we know—aside from his general depravity—that Heliogabalus was a music-lover, that he out-Neroed even Nero as a performer? Because Aelius Lampridius expressly says: "He sang, he danced, he played the flute, he blew the trumpet, he plucked the lute and played the organ." And the Byzantine historian Zonaras adds: "He sang barbaric songs to his strange (Syrian) god!"

Though among the Roman emperors Nero and Heliogabalus are outstanding examples of the degeneracy which seems part and parcel of the make-up of the crowned music-lover, there are numerous other examples to be found among their successors.

#### SOME ORIENTAL MUSICAL DYNASTS

But passing from the empire of the Romans, let us glance at the Oriental dynasts of the caliphate. The earlier and greater caliphs of the Omayyad house, Omar, Moawiya, Abdalmalik, Sueliman Walid (during whose reign Spain was conquered by the Arabs), had no time for music. But the weaker Yazid II held music, condemned by his predecessors Suleiman and Omar II, in high honor. Two of his court singers, Sallama and Hababa, exercised a great influence over him, and the death of the latter afflicted him so greatly that he perished of grief soon after she herself had died. Hisham followed Yazid II, and after Hisham came his son Walid II, "a handsome man," who cultivated music *con amore*, so much so, in fact, that the governor of Irak, on being confirmed in his office when Walid ascended the throne, included a number of *musical instruments* among the gifts of horses, falcons, golden and silver vessels which he sent the caliph as a sign of his gratitude. Walid had no real opportunity of proving the correctness of our hypothesis respecting musical monarchs, for he was murdered before the gift of musical instruments sent by his governor ever reached him.

Like the Omayyids, the earlier Abassids were also men of might, not men of music. Even Haroun-al-Rashid enjoyed it only incidentally. But among his successors we see mismanagement and music, incapacity and sonal sensibility ever going hand in hand.

There was Amin, for instance (d. 813), who was wholly incompetent. He occupied himself principally with the affairs of his harem, with polo, fishing, wine and *music*. Naturally, "the five years of his reign were disastrous to the empire." His successor, Mamun, was a ruler of rare qualities. His interests were scientific and literary, and his reign was a glorious one. During the reigns of Motawakkil, a cruel and perfidious voluptuary, Montasir, a weakling, Mostain and Motazz, the magnificent palace of Jafariya, which Motawakkil had built at Samarra, resounded to the pleatings of instruments and the voice. But one of the first measures of the able and energetic Mohtadi, when he ascended the throne, was to banish from court all musicians and singers. A ruler of this type was too good for the times, and Mohtadi was murdered in the year 870. With Motamid, his successor, the banished song-birds and lutenists probably returned to the palace; but they just as probably had to move out once more when his grandson Motadid inherited the crown, for after Mansur, this prince was one of the ablest and most energetic of the Abassid rulers. But thenceforward the Abassid dynasty died out tunelessly in shame and degradation through a succession of unworthy rulers, until the last caliph of the line, Mostasim, was slain by the Mongol Khan Hulaku in his own plundered capital. Hulaku, incidentally, a monster of cruelty, had the head of Kamil, a Mameluk prince whom he captured, and whom he killed by forcing bits of flesh torn from his body down his throat, carried through the streets of Damascus "with tambourines and singers moving before it," his "savage breast" quite unmoved by this ghastly musical procession.

#### SOME ENGLISH MUSICAL KINGS

Reverting from East to West once more, and considering some of the mediaeval dynasties of European rulers, we still find Shakespeare's contention not borne out by historic fact, in so far as it may be applied to kings. Alfred the Great, it is true, played the harp, and so did many a Norse, Swedish and Danish king of the time; the latter all having their trains of scalds and minstrels; but the music these bardic musicians made, served mainly as an incitement to deeds of blood and battle. Taillefer, who rode into the battle of Hastings singing the "Song of Roland," did so to animate the hearts of the Normans and Duke William. In the case of these rulers the bardic songs and harpings largely answered the same purpose that the roll of drum and brazen blare of military band do to-day. They were mere martial sound stimulants, all harping on the same old tune

of "Up, boys and at 'em!" They stood for no "charm to soothe." A little later on we come to Richard the Lion-Heart, King of England, Richard the troubadour, the chivalric, the gallant, the Crusader, passionately devoted to minstrelsy—and, perhaps, quite unconsciously one of the worst of English kings, because of his senseless prodigality, his love for expensive adventure far from home, his sacrifice of all the real interests of his kingdom for the rainbow bubbles of romantic enterprise. The story of how Blondel sang him out of his Austrian prison is well known. And his cruel and debauched brother, King John Lackland, who died of a surfeit of peaches and new cider, was also a lover of worldly tunes and ballads. Speaking of other English monarchs, Mary Bateson, in her "Medieval England" remarks with truth: "It is noticeable that of England's artistic kings, Henry III, Richard II and Charles I, not one was in harmony with his subjects." All of these sovereigns were prodigal, weak and devoid of executive ability. Henry III, "Harry of Winchester," also known as "the beggar-king," because of the extravagance which left him continually without resources, had unique methods of raising money when it was needed to pay his painters, artificers and musicians. When his son Edward was born, in 1236, the streets of London were illuminated, "whilst bands of dancers made the night joyful with drum and tambourine." But the king, fond as he was of a "joyful noise," quite aside from mere tuneful rejoicing also had an eye to more substantial expressions of pleasure on the part of his subjects. He sent messengers into the city and country to *ask* for presents. When they came back well loaded, the king smiled with satisfaction; but if the gift were small it was rejected with contempt. "God gave us the child," said one Norman, "but the king sells him to us!" It is no wonder the money flew, if we consider Henry's luxurious tastes. He must have his mattresses of velvet, his cushions and bolsters of silk, his damask napery, his goblet of mounted cocoa-nut, his glass cup set in crystal. And when his sister Isabella marries the Emperor, he gives her rich examples of goldsmiths' work, silver pans and cooking vessels, a chess-table and chessmen in an ivory casket, beds of Genoese cloth of gold, robes of Arras, and of scarlet, blue and green cambric, and much else by way of table-linen. And he pays a single harper at his court the very sizable stipend, very sizable indeed for that time, of forty shillings, and allows the musician a pipe of wine for himself and another pipe for his wife. The money to pay for his artistic and musical extravagances the king obtained by begging, borrowing and stealing—for in 1248, parliament remonstrated because the king "seized by force on whatever was used in the way of meat and drink

—especially wine and even clothes—against the will of those who sold these things!"

The tyrannical Richard II was another lavishly extravagant and incapable ruler, one who indulged his luxurious tastes by the most arbitrary methods of taxation. In his love for music he was the first English sovereign to have recourse to the "press-gang" to secure singing boys for the Royal Chapel. An official was authorized "to take and seize for the king all such singing-men expert in the science of music as he could find and think able to do the king service, within all places of the realm, as well as in cathedral churches, colleges, chapels, houses of religion, and all other franchised or exempt places, or elsewhere." Thus a tyrant for music's sake, he also lavished the most disproportionate rewards and annuities on his musicians out of the taxes wrung from his impoverished people—a truly musical monarch. He came to a bad end.

In fine contrast, King Henry V, the conqueror of France, though at his coronation at Westminster, "the number of harpers in the hall was innumerable," was himself "no encourager of the popular minstrelsy" which flourished in such perfection during his reign. When he returned in triumph from Agincourt, and made his entry into London, he came out firmly against the community sing—a stand which, according as one does or does not believe in community singing, may be held to argue that he was either quite unmusical or very musical indeed. Children had been placed in artificial turrets to sing verses in honor of the occasion. But King Henry would by no means countenance their music, which he not only forbade, but commanded that in the future "no ditties should be made by and sung by minstrels and others" in praise of the battle. King Henry V, who did not care for minstrelsy or children's choruses, died universally lamented by his subjects; while the taking off of Richard II, that magnificent music-lover, was felt by them as a distinct relief.

Henry VIII came honestly enough by his love for music. His father King Henry VII was rapacious and extortionate, and cultivated music. He was always attended by waits and minstrels, and had a fine collection of musical instruments. Henry VIII, another quasi-monster, delighted above all other things in "singing, dancing, wrestling, casting of the bar, playing at the recorders, flute, virginals, in setting of songs and making of ballads." Music remained a life-long passion with him, but it did not make him more humane or less licentious. The title of his best-known ballad, "The hunte is up," when we view it in the light of his activities as a ruler and a husband, seems almost to suggest the never-ending chase which drove so many victims to the axe and block on Tower Hill.

Queen Elizabeth shared one peculiarity with the Emperor Nero. It was dangerous not to praise whatever she did. There is no doubt that she was fond of music, and encouraged it at her court. But with regard to her own virginal playing, we suspect that the chances are that her unfortunate contemporary and cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, being by far—despite the romantic glamor surrounding her—the worse sovereign, must have been the better musician. The whole trend of historic fact lends support to the supposition.

The weak and worthless Stuarts who followed the Plantagenets and Tudors were all, as stands to reason, encouragers and patrons of music. James I, close and mean as he was about money matters, increased the stipend of the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal as one of the first acts of his reign. His son, the Prince of Wales, afterward King Charles I, learned to play the *viola da gamba* as a boy, and he became as accomplished a musician as he made a poor king. Cromwell, a strong man, knew no music save such pious airs as were set to godly psalms, and their words meant more than their tunes to him; but with the Restoration profane music again becomes the delight of the English court. That merry monarch Charles II was especially fond of his band of twenty-four fiddlers, and paid them well—when he paid them at all. On the other hand the musicians of the Royal Chapel, though their salaries were raised, never saw the color of their money, for Mr. Hingston, the organist, talking to Pepys (1666) says: “many of the musique are ready to starve, they being five years behind with their wages.” There was always plenty of music, both instrumental and vocal, at Whitehall, fostered by the king who sold his country to the French, and who, as a ruler, was probably the worst of all the Stuarts.

#### MUSICAL MONARCHS OF FRANCE

What holds good for English kings applies as well to the sovereigns of other European nations. Clovis, King of the Franks, a murderous monster, whose latter years in particular were stained by numerous crimes, sang. As has been said of him: “King Clovis sang out of tune, no doubt, but still he sang!” His was another “savage breast” uncharmed. King Dagobert, the Merovingian, an oppressive and licentious monarch, *did* have “music in his soul,” hence should not have been “fit for treason, stratagem and spoils.” He played the organ, and loved singing to such an extent, that hearing the nun Nanthilde warbling matins behind the cloister bars, he fell head over heels in love with her. As a result, again disproving Shakespeare, he betrayed his queen, divorcing her; used stratagem

to draw Nanthilde from her refuge, and married her as the spoils of his musical passion. When we come to the Capetians, we find that Hugh Capet, the able and energetic founder of the dynasty, was not what might be called musical. His son, however, Robert the Pious, was a weak and amiable music-lover, who composed hymns for the church service. Is it strange that he had a disturbed and stormy reign? Some of his hymns still survive, among them one beginning "O Constantia martyr." His wife Constantia had asked him to write a composition in her honor, and seeing her name beginning the first line of the text, was satisfied that he had done so, without investigating further. Philip Augustus, who was not musical, consolidated his kingdom and built hospitals, market-places, churches and other public buildings in Paris, whose principal streets he was the first to pave. His successor, Louis IX, though a man of noble character and extremely pious, included church music in the circle of his most vital interests. When he set sail for his Crusade against the Egyptian sultan his mariners sang the "Veni Creator" in chorus. There is, of course, no connection between this circumstance and the fact that his Egyptian Crusade was a total failure, he himself being taken prisoner, and only released upon payment of an enormous ransom, and that he died on a second crusade against Tunis, years afterward. And yet . . .

At the gorgeous court of King Philip VI of France, at which resided the Kings of Bohemia, Navarre and Mallorca, with their retinues—for their dull homes were never like Philip's Paris—all was banquets, balls, pageantry and mysteries, in which music played a leading part. But Philip had his Crecy. His son, King John, proud, presumptuous and cruel, and addicted to minstrels and magnificence like his father, found, in turn, Agincourt. The reign of Charles VI was also a musical one: the orchestra of the "Prince of Fools" flooded the royal court with music; and the king's wife, Isabelle of Bavaria, a monster in female form, was an accomplished harpist, though she did not use her art to calm her poor, mad husband's accesses of dementia. It was a reign of blood, murder and rapine, and one that well-nigh ruined the country. Charles VII is the king of "The Maid of Arc," but he is also the king of Agnes Sorel, to whose voice he loves to listen, and upon whom he lavishes the treasures of his realm. A king with a love for music, especially vocal music rendered by some fair and beloved singer, invariably increased the high cost of living for his subjects in the good old medieval days in France.

King René of Jerusalem and Sicily, Count of Provence, a contemporary of Charles the Bold of Burgundy, is literally music-mad.

He plays the violin himself, and spends his time with music-makers and minstrels, and his money on them. And so it goes: Louis XII, with whom the sixteenth century begins, and who burdened France with many costly wars, insists on being a singer. He has no voice; a single dubious note constitutes his entire range. So Josquin Duprez utilizes this sole note by writing a canon for the King, in which the royal vocalist may take part while singing no more than the one tone nature has placed at his disposal. Francis I, ruled by shallow-minded and incapable favorites, plays the lute; Charles IX has quite a gift for the violin—and carries out the bloody Massacre of St. Bartholomew! The fact that he preferred the violin to the flute or clavecin—then the instruments reserved for the quality, while the violin was held to be fit only for lackeys—shows that his musical tastes, from the standpoint of his own day, were low and vulgar. Henry III, the last of the Valois kings, was a sixteenth century Heliogabalus, and a lavish patron of music and pageantry. His insensate expenses ruined France, and the example set by himself and his infamous court, brought the morals of the land to their lowest ebb. Louis XIV, the most conspicuous of the Bourbons, though he has been called “the Great,” cannot in reality be so considered. He did not care for music in the genuine and intimate way that the Valois monarchs did, and he regarded those musical geniuses Lully and Rameau more as added embellishments of the festival pomp of his court, than as the creators of an independent artistic enjoyment dear to his heart. Louis XV had a fondness, especially in his ribald later years, for the *chansons grivoises*, whose low popular tunes and indecent verses he enjoyed in equal measure with Mme. du Barry, a *connoisseuse* entirely at home in them. Poor, dull Louis XVI did not react sensibly to music, though Marie Antoinette, the pupil of Gluck, had a neat gift for the clavecin and could sing. When not hunting, or enduring the tedious court ceremonial to which he was a slave, his dearest pleasure was his iron-work in his private smithy. Was he kind-hearted, virtuous and well-meaning because he was unmusical?

#### DEAD HAPSBURGHs, HOHENZOLLERNs, WITTELSBACHERs

We may turn to almost any other royal dynasty and find a similar showing of love for music coupled with weakness, lack of character, cruelty, depravity and every other vice; while the great and good monarchs are those who keep more or less aloof from the seduction of sound. In the case of the Moorish Omayyads of Spain, Abderrahman I and Abderrahman the III were great princes, skilled in war and adept administrators, but the reign of Abderrahman II, a



weak prince with a taste for music and literature, is described as a "time of confusion." Let us glance at the Hapsburgs. Rudolph of Hapsburgh, the founder of the dynasty, was a man who had no time for music—he was too busy creating an empire—but a weakness for music crept into the family long before the marriage of Francis, Duke of Lorraine, to the Empress Maria Theresia. The Emperor Ferdinand III, under whom the disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire was practically accomplished, was a musical *connoisseur* of considerable taste, and composed himself, notably an "Aria with 36 Variations," edited by his Court Organist Ebner. Leopold I, an intolerant bigot, was musically very well educated. He played several instruments, notably the clavier, and "tried out" the singers and instrumentalists who applied for positions in the Imperial orchestra himself. He always followed the score at opera performances, and would close his eyes blissfully when the most entrancing passages occurred. He left the war of the Spanish Succession as an evil legacy to his sons.

The oldest of these sons, who succeeded him as the Emperor Charles VI, was especially fond of composing canons, and accompanying at the piano. His daughter, the Empress Maria Theresia, was anything but a monster; but she was an out-and-out autocrat. Both she and her husband—during whose reigns Austria lost the bitterly contested Seven Years' War to Prussia—did much for the musical education of their children. In the midst of war, his country falling into ruins, his court receiving the bribes of his enemies, Charles VI composed an opera. He led the orchestra, the rôles were taken by princely and noble amateurs, and in the ballet which followed, his daughter danced in flesh-colored tights. His grandson, the gifted and artistic Joseph II, not only sang, but also played the pianoforte, the viola and the 'cello. He played a great deal for his own amusement, but was satisfied with the works of a Hasse and Salieri, not being able to rise to the heights of Mozart's genius. He told the latter, *à propos* of a performance of "The Abduction from the Seraglio": "Too fine for our ears, and what a tremendous number of notes, my dear Mozart!" Haydn's music, too, was beyond the emperor's limited musical taste to grasp. Joseph II did not escape the tragic fate which seems to be reserved for the few musical monarchs of good personal repute. Disgusted with the failure of his liberal and idealistic plans, he died of a broken heart.

As to the Hohenzollerns, Frederick the Great, a benevolent autocrat, plays the flute, yet is an empire builder in spite of this amiable weakness. But Frederick William II, who succeeded his

uncle Frederick, was easy-going, indolent and sensual. He played the 'cello; patronized Beethoven and Mozart, and instead of building up his country—when he died the state was bankrupt, the army decayed, and the monarchy discredited—built up the finest private orchestra to be found in Europe at that time. Among the lesser German princes of the eighteenth century were but few men of energy or character—and the majority of them were musical.

In the nineteenth century we have the mad King of Bavaria, Louis II, who, though he taxed his peasants to the bone in order to build the luxurious medieval castles (Linderhof, Herrenchiemsee, Hohenschwangau, Neuschwanstein) which attract visitors from all over the world, spared no money to launch the Wagner operas. He paid the composer's debts, granted him a large yearly pension, gave brilliant model performances of the Wagner dramas in Munich, gradually became incurably insane and met a tragic and mysterious death in the Starnberger See, together with his physician in 1886. His is one of the saddest cases among the royal musical madmen, for he had lovable traits, and, though wildly extravagant, was no Nero or Alphonse of Portugal.

#### MUSICAL MONARCHS OF THE NORTH

Yet fate is seldom kind to the monarchs loving music. They engage either our horror, or our commiseration. Mad musical kings are to be found in the cold North as well as in the sunny southern Bavarian land. King Eric XIV of Sweden, son of the great Gustavus Vasa, is crowned at Upsala, and rides gaily through Stockholm on July 12, 1561, to the roar of cannon, the peal of bells, and the cheers of his people. He loves music, and even writes a number of four-part choruses to Latin texts. But there is a pronounced strain of madness in him. He antagonizes his ambitious brothers, offends his nobles by marrying a young girl of obscure family, and is finally dethroned by the States of the Kingdom. Thrown into a dungeon and loaded with chains, he appeals to his brother John in the name of their father, and the latter orders books and musical instruments be given him. Yet they are taken from him again after a few days, and he is confined with even greater rigor. Removed to another prison he is tortured by being allowed to see his wife and child through the window, for a moment only. He endeavors to find consolation in singing the Psalms of David, and finally, poor maniac, is murdered in his prison. Christian IV of Denmark, splendor-loving, passionate, sensual, whose reign was an unfortunate one, and who descended to his grave weary and broken-hearted, was another

Scandinavian monarch who cultivated music with zest, and had the German composer Heinrich Schütz come to Copenhagen to reorganize his court orchestra.

It is not surprising to note, perhaps, that the most wretched of all the Romanoffs, the Emperor Peter Fedorovitch, son of a daughter of Peter the Great, "physically something less than a man and mentally little more than a child," did much to encourage the cultivation of music in Petrograd, and that, imbecile though he was, he is said to have played the violin "moderately well."

## TWO KINGS OF SPAIN

Among the Spanish Bourbons King Philip V, a sullen melancholiac, who was only kept from abdicating through his wife's holding him a virtual prisoner, was controlled in his sombre madness by the voice of Farinelli, the celebrated *castrato*. Farinelli came to Madrid in 1736, intending to stay a few months. He remained for twenty-five years. Night after night, ten years in succession, he had to sing to his royal master the same six songs, never any other. Ferdinand VI, the son of Philip, was also of a shy and melancholy disposition; and since music, with the exception of the hunt, was almost his sole pleasure and interest, Farinelli went right on with his nightly concerts. King Charles IV of Spain was a poor king and only a fair musician, yet very fond of music. Like so many string players who like to play quartet, yet are unhappy if they cannot play the first fiddle, whether they are qualified to do so or not, King Charles, until dethroned by Napoleon, always reserved this part for his royal self.

## A PORTUGUESE MUSICAL MANIAC

King Charles was merely a poor fool, but what are we to think of the unutterably vile and musical Alphonse VI, King of Portugal (1656-1683), a semi-maniac with strong homicidal tendencies. His life was an agreeable alternation of murder, music and licentious excess. He played the flageolet. He had married, in 1666, Marie Françoise Elizabeth, grand-daughter of Henry IV of France. Quite naturally, it did not take Queen Marie long to discover that she detested her amiable husband. Following this first discovery came a second one: she had fallen in love with his brother Don Pedro. There were various intrigues, plots and counterplots to force the abdication of Alphonse, and keep him on the throne. The King, his brother Pedro, Queen Marie, and some of the Portuguese nobles, appeared on the balcony of the palace to receive the plaudits of the

crowd. As an act of royal condescension, King Alphonse took a flageolet, piped a tune on it in the most abominable manner and, when he had finished, handed the instrument to a grave and respected nobleman and insisted on his playing it also. "The lowest of the populace were so disgusted that they had almost laid hands on the royal flageolet player, and dethroned him then and there." This sensible proceeding was not long deferred, in fact, and the insane musical king was kept in a confinement far too honorable for him until his death, passing his time in hunting, feasting, sleeping and—presumably—playing his beloved flageolet.

### CONCLUSION

The preceding presentation of monarchs whose more or less "savage breasts"—or if not savage, then irresolute, depraved, imbecile, or insane—refute the Shakespearian assertion anent music's power to charm, is by no means categorical. It merely brushes the surface, so to speak, in a general survey, which cannot pretend to be comprehensive. At the same time it bears sufficient witness to the truth of the contention that—in monarchs, at any rate—there is often a subtle interconnection between musical tastes and proficiencies, and a lack of kingly and even human virtues. History seems determined to prove that a love for music is a species of immorality in the case of the crowned head; that it often lays a curse on its activities. Perhaps it would be going too far to try to fix the exact degree to which the musical leanings of the ex-emperor William II of Germany, his encouragement of Leoncavallo operas, and his own "Sang an Aegir," were responsible for his overthrow and the loss of the late war by the Central Powers. Yet one might be tempted to believe, in the light of historic evidence, that the cult of music by royalty is distinctly of ill omen for its cultivators. Napoleon III was fond of Offenbach and Waldteufel waltzes. This indulgence alone would not have brought him to Sedan and Wilhelmshöhe. But with a liking for Waldteufel went the other characteristics often found in a musical temperament: a tendency to visionary speculation, a weak and easy yielding to the influence of others, an abdication of the dictates of reason in favor of sentimental affection. That unfortunate Mexican Emperor Maximilian, one of the most sympathetic of the Hapsburgs, was not shot by his rebellious subjects because he was musical, nor because he had had sent to the Tyrolean Alps for a shipment of two thousand canary-birds, to teach the gorgeously plumaged feathered tribes of the Mexican forests a truly musical bird-note, and increase, multiply, and subdue

the wilderness of Anahuac with their song. No, not because he had the musical temperament, but because it made itself felt in momentous practical decisions, and carried with it the artistic weaknesses and irresolutions which are fatal when rapid and decided action are demanded.

Are the uncomplimentary theories regarding music and "the savage breast," which history seems to justify with such an abundance of proof, applicable only to the uneasy heads of royalty? Ordinary mortals, the rank and file, who are able to enjoy music and compose and execute it without suffering morally, will be inclined to answer in the affirmative. Had they not been emperors and kings, Nero, Heliogabalus, Henry III of France, Richard II of England, and many another might have made better musicians—they could not have been worse rulers. Still, perhaps, some day Shakespeare's poetic hypothesis may become universally true and an actual fact.